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India's G20 Presidency: A Public Diplomacy Perspective ^[1]

India assumed the presidency of the G20 (Group of 20 countries) in December 2022 for a one-year term. It's an incredible opportunity, which the Indian government is endeavoring to seize. Throughout 2023, there will be two hundred meetings in fifty cities. Foreign delegates and guests are getting a glimpse of the rich cultural heritage of India's cities. Through these meetings, India is showing the world its "Unity in Diversity," along with a theme inspired by the sacred books: "Vasudhiave Kutumbkam," meaning the whole world is one family.

The Major Priorities for India in these meetings are Green Development, Climate Finance, and Life; Accelerated, Inclusive and Resilient Growth; Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure; Multilateral Institutions for the 21st Century; and Women-Led Development.

India has enthusiastically welcomed the G20 delegates, with each meeting in a new host city,

allowing delegates to experience India's unique traditions, cultures, and cuisines.

Indian citizens from these cities have been excited and enthusiastic, particularly because of the decorations. As a resident of Varanasi, one of the host cities, I have also witnessed beautiful decor around the streets and Ganga Ghats. India is famous for its unity in diversity, as well as its hospitality. Through the G20 meetings, India is showing the world its commitment to Atithi Devo Bhava, which for Indians, means guests are equivalent to gods.

Vasudhaiav Kutumbkam – The Whole World is One Family

India follows the concept of Vasudhaive Kutumbkam, which stands for “One Earth, One Family, and One Future.” The theme is represented in India's G20 logo, with Earth closely connected to LIFE 📄 (Lifestyle for Environment), and color taken from India's tri-color flag. India has always emphasized global peace in its messaging and “humanity first” in its culture.

With its G20 logo, India is conveying that the world is one family and can fight against international problems like climate change, pandemics, food and energy insecurity, and terrorism, with mutual understanding and cooperation.

Modern city diplomacy 📄 has also been seen during this period in India as the major cities welcome G20 delegates. These events are not only limited to the political arena; the public is also enjoying the events organized for the foreign delegates. The responsibilities and duties of state and local government have increased, and there has been a need for coordination and cooperation between central and state government.

Through its pledge of “One District, One Product,” the government has tried to influence foreign actors by gifting them products manufactured by local artists as mementos. This has been a big opportunity for states and local governments to emphasize the concept, “Think Globally Act Locally” as well as to advertise goods “Made in India.”

The government is also spreading awareness about the G20 among its citizens, to underscore how an event of this kind can boost India's tourism sector. For instance, using the platform, University Connect, the central government has directed universities and colleges to organize events like lectures, talks, poster making, and debates regarding the G20.


Boosting Tourism Sector

It is a precious time for India to utilize this event to boost its tourism sector. The PM said that the G20 is an opportunity to present the “diverse and distinctive colours” of our culture to the world, as delegates who attend the meetings are “tourists of the future.”


Through the meetings in various cities, the G20 delegates experience India's multiculturalism, receiving a different traditional welcome in each city. In each location, delegates have been able to get acquainted with local culture, cuisine, major tourist spots, etc.

Through its G20 events, India's domestic and international efforts are capturing the attention of global audiences, which will hopefully provide a boon to India's tourism sector.

During this one-year term, India has tried to emphasize a wide range of topics affecting humanity. At India's urging, the United Nations has also declared 2023 as an international year of millets – a great achievement for India. So, India has also been celebrating millet year, and to promote this, a gift hamper of millet has been gifted to the delegates.

The G20 presidency is a big achievement not only for India but also the Global South . For many decades, the Global South has had limited voice and participation on the international stage. India, on the other hand, invited six guest countries from the Global South—Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Nigeria, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates—to join the meeting, making it more inclusive. A virtual summit of Global South developing countries was also organized on January 12 and 13, 2023, under the theme, “Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose.” It's a path-breaking initiative, bringing 125 nations to one platform to share their unique experiences.

It's also a chance for India to show the world that India can lead the Global South. During the pandemic, India has demonstrated its leadership by helping supply the world with medicine, vaccines and other assistance. India can be the leading voice of the Global South as it has a rich history of leading developing nations. Through its leadership of the Non-Alignment Movement, its fight against discrimination, and support for democracy, India has been proactive in raising its voice on behalf of Global South at every international forum.

India's vision of “one earth, one family, one future” offers a message of unity to the world. It is well on its way to meeting its G20 goals and priorities. However, there should be a greater focus on the issue of women-led development. Doing so would expand inclusion and would be a great achievement for India. Hopefully, there will be some concrete measurement of gender equality and women's active participation in every field, as India has done at the  domestic level .

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